

INAUGURAL ADDRESS,

DELIVERED IN THE HALL OF THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

DECEMBER 9, 1852,

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

OF THE

SOUTH CAROLINA COLLEGE,

BY J. L. REYNOLDS, D. D.,

PROFESSOR OF BELLES LETTRES AND ELOCUTION.



COLUMBIA, S. C.:

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CORRESPONDENCE.

COLUMBIA, Dec. 14th, 1852.

Sir :—The undersigned were appointed a committee under a resolution of the House of Representatives, charging them with the duty of soliciting a copy of your late Inaugural Address, as a Professor in the South Carolina College.

The committee take great pleasure in communicating the above request, and are satisfied the publication of the Address, under the authority of the House, through the medium of the committee, will be greatly to the advantage of the public, and will well attest the propriety of this well deserved expression of confidence and approval.

We have the honor to be, sir,

Very respectfully,

Your ob't. serv'ts.

JAMES D. TRADEWELL, }
R. B. BOYLSTON, } *Committee.*
J. B. KERSHAW, }

Professor J. L. REYNOLDS.

COLUMBIA, S. C., Dec. 15, 1852.

Gentlemen :—I have the honor of acknowledging the receipt of your communication, conveying the request of the House of Representatives, for a copy of my Inaugural Address for publication.

Grateful for this expression of the approbation of your honorable body, I commit the manuscript to your disposal.

Very respectfully,

Your ob't. serv't.

J. L. REYNOLDS.

MESSRS. JAMES D. TRADEWELL, }
R. B. BOYLSTON, } *Committee.*
J. B. KERSHAW, }



INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

Among the endowments which distinguish man from beings of an inferior rank, there is none which more clearly evinces the wisdom and goodness of the Creator than the gift of speech. Reason is, indeed, a high and noble prerogative; but denied the auxiliary of speech, it would fail to secure its most important ends; and man, although capable of a wider reach of thought than the brute, would find himself equally restricted in the ability to give it utterance. Deprived of the means of expression which are supplied in the human voice, he would possess neither the capacity nor the taste for social intercourse; the fruits of the understanding, and of the heart, would perish on the soil from which they sprang; the materials of enjoyment, as well as the means of usefulness, which are scattered in profusion around him, would be entirely beyond his reach; and he would pass through life unblessed by the refining and ennobling influences which spring from the fellowship of the race.

In the absence of articulate sounds, human feeling might find expression in visible signs, or in the tones which nature suggests; and thus man might communicate to others his love or hate, his joy or grief. But the communication of thought demands an instrument of greater flexibility and power; so that, were he denied the resources of language, although he might be impelled by his intellectual instincts to reflect, abstract and generalize, he would be deterred by the conviction that he lacked the means of achieving so high an elevation, and so extended a circuit. His intellectual eye might be directed to the sun, but the pinions would be wanting to sustain his flight.

While speech is thus auxiliary to the mind, and constitutes the most effective medium of its manifestation, it is also, in some respects, the condition of its development. It is both the cause and the consequence of intellectual activity; for thought and expression, on account of the reciprocal relations which subsist between them,

exert a vast influence upon each other. A language which by its copiousness, precision and elegance, answers the high requisitions of thought, and yields readily to its expression, invigorates the intellects of those who speak it, and derives from the energy it imparts, fresh accessions to its own powers and resources. No nation has ever attained an elevated rank in literature, without possessing an adequate instrument of thought; no nation thus furnished has failed to contribute to the intellectual advancement of the race. Hence, the language of a people is justly regarded as the criterion of their mental cultivation, indicating by its wealth or poverty, the measure of their progress in civilization. It reflects, as in a mirror, their entire intellectual being. The tongue of ancient Greece is the true exponent of her marvellous capabilities. Replete with the inspiration of genius, it suggested to her poets, philosophers and orators, the wonders which it enabled them to perform. Language unfetters and wings the mind, and invites its excursions over the boundless domain of knowledge. Apart from the aids which it furnishes, man's entire intellectual existence would be but a prolonged and feeble nonage.

To the facilities which nature has provided for the interchange of thought and sentiment, man has added the invention of letters, by means of which, sound acquires a material existence, and may be conveyed beyond its natural limits. Were the commerce of mind restricted to the aids which are furnished by the vocal functions, the advantages of social enjoyment and intellectual improvement would be dependant on personal intercourse; bodily presence would be indispensable to mental converse; and mind, instead of triumphing over space, would be isolated by its intervention. For the want of a better mode of preservation, knowledge would be entrusted to the precarious custody of the memory; and even the truths of revelation, which are now so effectually guarded by the defences of the sacred Scriptures, could be preserved only by oral tradition, a method which in addition to its incompetency to transmit so large a body of truth, is peculiarly exposed to mistake and imposture. Without the facilities for accumulation which are conferred by alphabetical language, the stock of knowledge would continue stationary. The intellectual wealth of one generation would seldom descend unimpaired to another; and the highest powers of the race would be so exclusively employed in preserving the domain of existing knowledge that little leisure would remain for enlarging it by the acquisition of new territory, and the progressive advancement of its frontier. The

transition from oral to written language constitutes one of the first steps of a nation in its march to civilization.

By the invention of letters—in which sound, which makes only a fugitive impression on the ear, is subjected to the scrutiny of the eye—the viewless vehicle of thought is rendered visible and tangible, and transmuted into a record more durable than brass. Thus the creations of genius may be transmitted to every land, and preserved for every age. Alphabetical language—the daguerreotype of the speaking voice, copies its most rapid evolutions; paints to the eye its protean shapes; and gives them “a local habitation and a name,” so that the conceptions of which they are the signs, may be indefinitely reproduced.

In the possession of these signs of thought, the writer enjoys a privilege which is denied to the painter and the sculptor. The productions of his genius may be multiplied without limitation; and copies taken by an inferior hand are equal in excellence to the original. The marble group of Laocoon could be reproduced only by a combination of genius scarcely inferior to that which originally achieved it; but the lines in which Virgil has depicted the terrible scene, are possessed by multitudes, in the perfection to which they were wrought by the master’s hand.

Nothing can be more gratifying to a benevolent mind than the ample provision which is thus made for human improvement and happiness. “The pen” has been happily styled by Cerrantes, “the tongue of the mind.” It commands the ear of an audience, however numerous or remote. By means of it, the influence of the wise and the good is enlarged and prolonged; the author is endowed with an earthly immortality; and genius and virtue, surviving the dissolution of the body, stretch forth their torches from the tomb, to enlighten, guide and bless mankind. The conceptions of a great man, the emotions which gladdened or grieved his heart, the very “form and pressure” of his intellectual life, are bodied forth in words that cannot die, to reproduce in other minds the forms of light and beauty which threw their radiance over his own. Thus the spell of genius is never utterly broken. Its mysterious presence pervades its works, and gives to the dead letter a living power which perpetuates its dominion over the race.

Such considerations, while they are suited to incite the efforts of the scholar, by suggesting a just appreciation of the influence which he may exert while living—an influence commensurate with the

diffusion of his writings—are no less adapted to secure his tranquillity, when tempted to discouragement by contemporary neglect. The meed of genius is sometimes tardily bestowed. If “fallen on evil days, and evil tongues,” he appeals in vain, to an unsympathizing generation, he may bequeath to future ages the unappreciated results of his toil. These will do him justice; and in the intelligent commendation of his works will pronounce the irreversible verdict of his fame.

When we reflect upon the intimate relation which written language sustains to the happiness of our race, and their progress in knowledge and virtue, we cannot fail to recognise in it one of the choicest supports and ornaments of civilized society. Admirably adjusted to the ends which it contemplates, whether it be considered the direct gift of Heaven to man, or the product of the faculties bestowed on him at his creation, it presents a beautiful and impressive illustration of a final cause. There is nothing within the realm of Natural Theology which more clearly and forcibly attests the divine wisdom and benevolence.

The field of discussion opened by this subject, is sufficiently extensive to tempt to a wider excursion. But little need be adduced to evince the importance of the study of language, to vindicate the pursuits of those who appropriate a large portion of their time and labor to its cultivation, and to justify the attention which is given to it in our institutions of learning. Independently of the inexhaustible sources of instruction and entertainment, which are opened in the department of criticism, advantages which are peculiarly its own—the relation which it sustains to all the other departments of instruction—is sufficient to evince its utility. As language is the universal medium of communicating thought, success in every branch of knowledge is suspended, in some measure, upon its dexterous employment. The science of criticism pervades all other sciences—lends its aid to the philosopher, the metaphysician, and the historian, and enables them to commend their speculations and researches by the charms of a felicitous diction.

Language addresses itself to the senses as well as to the intellect, and is suited to delight no less than to instruct. Its melodies, whether in the rhythm of prose or the metre of poetry, fall upon the ear with enchanting sweetness, and furnish materials of the most exquisite enjoyment. Hence the productions in which its capacities are displayed, assume the highest rank in literature. They con-

stitute the richest fruitage of the mind, and are garnered with pride, among the noblest portions of a nation's heritage of glory.

To entitle a composition to this proud distinction, perspicuity, precision and energy, are not the only requisites. The highest excellence of style involves the satisfaction of the ear no less than the conviction of the understanding. The ability to meet fully this requisition constitutes the superiority of the writer of taste to the mere inditer of sentences. Apprized of the various avenues which nature opens to the mind and the heart, he aims at the conquest of the entire man ; and to this end, combining the charms of melody with the energy of thought, he makes both the meaning and the music of his words tributary to the triumphs of his genius.

The mental and the physical constituents of man's nature are so intimately allied, that the body is the natural interpreter of the mind. Hence the superiority of spoken to written language. The tones of the voice, the looks and gestures which accompany discourse, convey a meaning which words are inadequate to express. Constituting a universal language, and appealing to fixed principles in human nature, they are adapted to excite in others the sentiments of which they are the recognized symbols. They transfer emotion and passion from breast to breast, with an accuracy and a telegraphic rapidity, which no other instrumentality can command. Words, as the symbols of thought, address the understanding, but the voice captivates the ear ; and gesture, the eye. He who avails himself of these various expedients, is possessed of every requisite to persuade, enchant, and sway his fellow men.

To compass the highest excellence of speech, the orator is provided by nature, in the human voice, with an instrument of rare flexibility and power, far transcending the most elaborate contrivances of art. Capable of but few elementary sounds, and restricted in its compass to a limited number of tones, it is yet suited by the endless variety of their modes and combinations, to express every modification of thought and every phase of feeling. Its marvellous capability appears alike in the plain melody of narrative and description ; in the measured march of dignity and solemnity ; in the tripping phrase of gayety ; in the energy and force which give expression to confidence and authority ; in the rapid and changeful ebullitions of anger, rage and wrath ; in the guttural murmur and aspirated sharpness of hate and revenge ; in the whine of peevishness, the shout of joy, and the broken melody of grief ; in the scream of terror, the

whisper of secrecy, and the undertone of fear. Nothing within the entire range of human experience exceeds the measure of its expressive power.

It is our rare felicity to have inherited a language, which affords ample scope for the employment of the varied functions of the human voice. Inferior in some respects, to those which were moulded by the plastic genius of Greece and Rome into forms of undecaying excellence, it yields to none, either ancient or modern, in the material which it furnishes for a manly and effective elocution. Neither the genuine poet nor the accomplished orator is exposed to the risk of failure, in consequence of the want of pliancy in his material. It yields readily to his touch, and may be fashioned into infinite, yet beautiful varieties.

Our grating English, whose Teutonic jar
Shakes the racked axle of Art's rattling car,
Fits like Mosaic in the lines that gird
Fast in its place each many-angled word.
From Saxon lips Anacreon's numbers glide,
As once they melted in the Teian tide.
And fresh transfused, the Iliad thrills again,
On Albion's cliffs as o'er Achaia's plain.
The proud heroic, with its pulse-like beat
Rings like the cymbals clashing as they meet;
The sweet Spenserian, gathering as it flows,
Sweeps gently onward to its dying close,
Where waves on waves in long succession pour,
Till the ninth billow melts along the shore.
The lonely spirit of the mournful lay,
Which lives immortal as the verse of Gray,
In sable plumage slowly drifts along,
On eagle pinion, through the air of song.
The glittering lyric bounds elastic by,
With flashing ringlets and exulting eye,
While every image in her airy whirl,
Gleams like a diamond on a dancing gird.

With such a language as our noble mother tongue, the highest accomplishments of the art are within the reach of the genuine orator. It is scarcely a license of the imagination to say that he may occupy the position which, by the pardonable exaggeration of a professed votary, has been ascribed to a monarch in the realm of poetry.

He laid his hand upon "the ocean's mane,"
And played familiar with his hoary locks,
And with the thunder talked, as friend to friend;
And wove his garland of the lightning's wing,
In sportive trust—the lightnings fiery wing,

Which, as the footsteps of the dreadful god,
 Marching upon the storm in vengeance, seemed.
 Then turned, and with the grasshopper, who sang
 His evening song beneath his feet, conversed.

All passions of all men,
 The wild and tame, the gentle and severe,
 He tossed about, as tempest withered leaves.
 With terror, now, he froze the cowering blood,
 And now, dissolved the heart in tenderness.

In connection with this tribute to the admirable resources of the English language, the remark may not be inappropriate, that the duty of preserving its purity devolves with peculiar force upon the scholars of the present generation. It is theirs to guard it against the innovations of ignorance, lawlessness and pedantry, and to transmit to their successors our noble "well of English," unimpaired and undefiled. This duty has reference not only to the selection and arrangement of words, but to their accent and pronunciation. The observance of these minor morals of speech—for so may accent and pronunciation be termed—is the infallible mark of the ripe scholar; and it should be as studiously cherished by the man of taste, as the conventionalities of polite society are by the gentleman. It is our duty to obey, not to enact, the laws of language; and any gross departure from the recognized standard, exposes the offender to the imputation either of ignorance or presumption, an alternative which no man of sense ought to be willing to encounter.

To acquire the excellences of oratory, the student is usually remanded to the precepts and example of the masters of antiquity; and, it must be confessed, that in the treatment of style, they were eminently successful, and left little to be accomplished by modern ingenuity. They do not seem, however, to have made a philosophical analysis of the human voice, or noted, in intelligible terms, its distinctive functions. Aristotle touched the subject, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Cicero and Quintilian elaborated it, with a copiousness, which evinces that they designed to reveal all the known secrets of their art; but their description of the movement of the voice is so indefinite, and, in some cases, so manifestly erroneous, that little real instruction can be gleaned from their writings. Ignorant of any system of notation by which its modes and transitions might be designated, they attempted to describe them by metaphorical terms, which convey no meaning to the ear. If "the proud judgment" of this organ, which has been ascribed to the Greeks,

ever existed, they have failed to transmit to us any record of the methods by which the orator met its requisitions.

The honor of giving to the world a complete system of elocution was reserved for modern times, and for one of our own countrymen.

The work of Dr. James Rush, of Philadelphia, entitled "The Philosophy of the Human Voice," may be regarded as the first attempt to present "a methodical description of all the vocal phenomena, with a view to bring the subject within the limits of science, and thereby to assist the purposes of oratorical instruction." The patience with which he has prosecuted his researches into the natural history of the voice, the accuracy of his observation, the subtlety of his analysis, and the delicacy of his discrimination justify the conviction which he has expressed that "if science should ever come to one consent on this point, it will not differ essentially from the system which he has developed." It is a reproach to the age, that his principles have not been more speedily and generally adopted.

One of the most formidable obstacles to the attainment of an accomplished elocution has arisen from a radical mistake in reference to the principles on which it depends. It has, unhappily, been regarded as the spontaneous product of nature. Its highest excellences have been supposed to consist of "graces beyond the reach of art;" and the pupil has been commended to the promptings of instinct, rather than the guidance of established principles. This error could not have become so extensively prevalent, had its abettors allowed themselves to reflect that nature, although the mother of art, is inferior to her offspring; for it is by the scrutinizing observation and the judicious combination of her scattered elements, that art conceives and realizes its ideal of excellence.

The truth of this remark is universally admitted in the arts of painting and sculpture; but it is no less applicable to the art of elocution. Nature exhibits no individual specimen of perfection, no faultless model for imitation. Her laws, constituting the governing principles of art, are to be eliminated from the phenomena which she submits to our scrutiny; and it is only by the steps of a rigid analysis and a comprehensive induction, that we rise to the conception of the ideal beauty of speech. A system of principles deduced from the observation of nature, under the guidance of a discriminating taste, renders the practice of elocution independent of the caprices of fashion and the mimicry of imitation. It brings us back to

nature, and enables us to discover the agencies which she discloses to enlarge and multiply the triumphs of art.

The science of Elocution, like that of Music, is remarkably simple, but the art, which consists in the practical exemplification of its rules, is beset with difficulties which nothing but strenuous and persevering industry can overcome. In our country, in consequence of the late period at which the attention of the young is directed to the more graceful and elegant branches of learning, the obstructions arising from neglect and the contraction of bad habits are more formidable than the inherent difficulties of the subject. Speaking is, in the judgment of the multitude, so natural and easy as to preclude the necessity of instruction and discipline; and while the accomplishments of the sister art of Music are accepted, under the hard condition which makes success the fruit of labor and time; a good elocution is regarded as the gift of nature or the lucky inspiration of genius.

To this general neglect, the consequence of a low appreciation of the proprieties of speech, must be attributed the mortification and discouragement which attend the student of elocution at the outset of his career, and the presumptuous ignorance, which, in not a few instances, prevents him from engaging in its pursuit. Inflated with the pride of genius, he disdains the rigor of discipline; or if he rises to a just appreciation of the obstacles which lie in his path, he is mortified to discover that at an age in which he has already grasped the sublime, and which philosophy discloses as the lights of other sciences, he is necessitated, in the science of elocution, to retrace his steps, and begin at the very elements of speech. He must tune his voice, rectify his articulation, and, perhaps, regulate his breathing; thus descending to the first rounds of the ladder, which, in his ignorance or vanity, he fancied he had already climbed. To the precocious orator, who has yielded to the fascinating illusion that the frothy declamation of the academy has placed him within the magic circle of Demosthenes and Cicero; the conviction is humbling, yet salutary, that if he would reach their elevated position, he must begin where they began; that the orator is made not born, and that the first step towards the attainment of excellence consists in the admission of the simple truism that "if we wish to speak well, we must first learn how."

In reference to the cause and the consequences of the depressed

condition of the art of elocution, Prof. Caldwell has remarked in his admirable "Manual:"

"Children should never be permitted to read what they cannot understand; the school-boy should never be permitted to commit a piece for rehearsal upon the stage, till he has been taught the principles upon which it should be read and spoken; and in our higher institutions of learning, all that has been neglected in the preparatory training should be supplied by a patient system of practical instruction, embracing every point which is essential to an effective and powerful delivery. But most of those who have charge of the business of elementary instruction, are themselves ignorant of the very simplest elements of elocution; nor in many of our higher seminaries of learning, is any but the most feeble attempt made to supply the defect of early education arising from this source. Even in some of our Colleges, every attempt to set forth this subject will be met with coldness and neglect. But may it not be hoped that the time is near, when a distinction shall be every where made between those Seminaries and Colleges which send out from their walls those who by a good delivery are prepared to make effective use of all their other acquisitions, and those whose sons have only their certificates and diplomas to present to the public as evidence of their education. While speech and reason are among the leading characteristics of man, it is melancholy to reflect on the enormous waste of *reasoning* power among the educated class of society, arising from the neglect to cultivate the *power of speech*. Our country abounds in good writers, while a good speaker is really almost a prodigy. The sole reason of this is, that rhetoric and all the elegances of composition are taught, while elocution is left to nature and to chance."

One of the causes which have retarded the advancement of the art of elocution, is to be found in the fact that few teachers competent to the task have been willing to assume the office of instruction. It is usually expected of a professor of an art that he should exemplify in himself the principles which it unfolds, and possess its highest accomplishments, while experience clearly evinces that, in the practice of elocution, few can hope to rise above mediocrity, and none to attain absolute perfection. Hence, while the intrepid charlatan proffers his services, with the confidence which ignorance inspires, he who is in some degree qualified to instruct, contemplates the task with a reluctance proportioned to his cultivated taste, and his enlightened estimate of the standard to which he desires to attain.

If perfection, or even a high degree of accomplishment in elocution, were the sole measure of a teacher's usefulness, the chair of instruction would seldom be properly filled. But happily this is not the case. Elocution, as has been remarked, is a science as well as an art, and a thorough acquaintance with the principles of the science, will give to an intelligent instructor the taste to direct the execution of his pupils, although he may not be pre-eminent himself in the ability to execute. On this point, Dr. Rush has remarked that, "a full understanding of the mere theory of speech, without an accomplished practical execution of its rules, will enable one to overlook the exercises of others, with the decisive commendation or censure of intelligent criticism." And these are the qualifications which are particularly demanded in a teacher.

The various methods which are employed for exchanging the products of the mind, are so intimately related, that they are all appropriately included in the same department of instruction. The science of criticism, in its widest extent, embraces under one general view, all the external signs of our mental states, natural and conventional, voluntary and involuntary, and develops their nature, connection, and uses. It unfolds the laws of language; the principles which regulate the selection and arrangement of words, and the use of the different qualities of style; and the relations which nature has instituted between emotions and passions, and their visible or audible signs. Such investigations lead the student into the arena of man's mental and moral constitution; enlarge his knowledge of human nature, make him familiar with the springs of action, and supply him with rules for the practical conduct of life; correct and refine his taste, and shape his powers of apprehension and discrimination; open to him sources of dignified entertainment, and disclose to him ennobling views of the wisdom, goodness, and glory of the Creator. As he advances, new and more beautiful prospects are continually unfolding before him. He is filled with admiration at the harmony which subsists between man and nature; the exquisite skill with which his internal constitution has been adjusted to the external world; the generous provision which is made for his instruction and his relaxation, his usefulness and his happiness; and the delightful gradations by which he is led up the steep ascents of knowledge and virtue. That sensibility to beauty, that sympathy with whatever is noble or exalted, that genial appreciation of excellence, which it is the province of these pursuits to inspire and to foster, infuse a robust



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vigor and a healthful glow into his moral and social relations; fortify his sense of duty by the suggestions of a refined taste, and allure him to the attainment of moral perfection, by the powerful motives which appeal to him from the marvellous nature which he possesses as the gift of God.

ERRATA.

Page 8 line 28, dele "—" after "instruction."

" 13 " 25, for "sublime, and" read "sublime laws."

" 15 " 24, for "arena" read "arcana."

" " 28, for "shape" read "sharpen."

